

Acceptance

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Summary: Angel has a lot on his mind and on his plate. Sequel to The Next Chapter

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> <meta name="Generator"> Angel slammed his hand down on the alarm one more time, but it did not stop ringing

Angel slammed his hand down on the alarm one more time, but it did not stop ringing. This was really confusing to him as he had once again destroyed a completely good alarm clock. They usually stopped buzzing when they were crushed. Then he realized it was the phoneâ€| That damn cell phone Cordy was always slipping in his pocket no matter how many times he accidentally forgot it.

"What is it Cord, I told you I would be up by 2:00, it's only 12:00. Every self-respecting demon is still asleep. I should be too."

"Buffy went out on a case again."

"I'll be there in two minutes. Have the address ready and be ready to go, no primping."

He was going to kill her. He was going to tie her to the bed, chain her to the wall and glue her to the chair. He was still reciting that to himself when he got to office. Cordelia and Wesley looked about as happy.

"I only went to the bathroom for a minute. She answered the phone and was off before I even got back. She left this note, no address." Cordelia placated, making sure she was on the other side of the desk as she held out the note.

"Angel, there is no reason to believe she is in any danger. It is probably just a routine kinda case. She promised after the last demon

orgy of death that she wouldn't go into harms way anymore. I'm sure it's fine." Wesley didn't sound like he was convincing himself. He definitely was not convincing Angel.

The note said only, "Quick case, no biggie. See you at dinner. Chocolate, liver and strawberries please. Love, Buffy,"

Angel looked up at Cordelia. "How long were you gone?"

"Ten minutes tops, maybe twenty. Definitely no more than thirtyâ€| Hey it's a bad hair day alright!"

"Trace the call and find out who made it. Call us with the address. Wes, you're driving."

"Thanks Cordelia, we're on it." Wesley hung up the phone. "Cordelia traced the call, got the address and called over there. Seems Gunn has unearthed another nest. He and Buffy were just going to scope it out. Buffy told him you would come over later and help him clean it out." Wesley smiled nervously over his shoulder. "See I told you, perfectly harmless."

Angel actually growled from the dark of the back seat. Wesley decided it was time to shut up.

Buffy was talking to Gunn about the nest when Angel and Wesley arrived.

"Thanks for the call, Gunn. Small nests like this one can be big trouble if they aren't nipped in the bud. As a personal favor if you could not mention this to Angel, I'd really appreciate it."

"Too late." Angel growled.

Buffy spun around at his voice. The slick tile, her totally impractical high-heeled boots and gravity on her eight months pregnant body all conspired against her. She went down like a ton of bricks. Only someone with vampire reflexes like Angel could have caught her. Buffy smiled up at him weakly. "Busted, huh vamps?"

They were still arguing when they got back to the office. Both Wesley and Cordelia decided to call it a day before anyone got out the crossbows and swords. Neither Buffy nor Angel even heard them leave.

"That was stupid and you know it. We agreed that you would clean up Cordelia's file system, answer phones and stay here. No pregnant romps with vampires, demons or any creatures of darkness."

"Go to hell!"

"Been there, done that, babysitting you is worse!"

"I am a grown woman and can do what I like! God, you sound like Giles on steroids!"

"Look me in the eye and tell me that Giles would have let you go like this. Just try. At least I let you help around the office. I shouldn't even do that but you get all weepy on me when I try to make you stay home. But this time the tears won't work, so put them

away!"

"I can't help it. It's not my fault. It's all your fault. I didn't do anything wrong. Honest I was just gonna go look, scope it out and stuff. They were all asleep, now they are dead and nothing happened."

"Right, you got the nick above your eye, and the cut on your lip from nothing."

"I swear it was a little one. Coulda handled him in labor with my eyes closed."

"You asked me to help you. You told me Finn would want you here. You told me this baby means everything. Buffy, this has got to stop. Your balance is shot, you know it is. Today wasn't the first time you've almost fallen. If I hadn't caught you it would have been bad. I don't want to even think about the bad things scenario that you fighting vampires creates. Until the baby is born Buffy, I mean it. You are grounded. Now go take a nap until I get your bizarre craving-fest 2000 dinner, or so help me I will drink you dry where you stand and have this whole mess over with!"

Buffy stood there, tears streaming down her cheeks. That was the worst part, the tears. They had become much too frequent of late. Angel knew she couldn't help it, but Buffy on hormones was a sight to behold and he couldn't take it much longer. She sniffled slightly as she passed him in the doorway and the sound was like a stake in his heart. Reily got off easy being killed by Adam. Living death by pregnant Buffy was ten times worse and counting.

He was so engrossed in that thought that he didn't hear Wesley come in behind him.

"Paternal Bliss wearing thin?"

"Shut up Wes." Then, "She's trying to kill herself. She can't be this stupid. This makes no sense."

"Her slayer instincts can't help that she's pregnant. She was always impulsive to begin with. Hormones make it worse. It's easier to go out and slay than to stay home and deal with being an unwed mother at 19. The biological father of her baby is dead, her friends are dead, her best friend is undead and she can't even be with the only other person she loves for fear of making him too happy. Whatever your thinking Angel, you don't want to trade hells with Buffy."

"No, and I can't rescue her this time. No more than she could rescue me."

Wesley sat down on Angel's desk and rested his chin on his fist.

"Only one month left."

"Please Angel, lie down with me. I really need to feel close to someone right now. Please."

Angel sighed and climbed into the bed next to Buffy. She snuggled her back against him and instantly fell asleep. Only when he held her

like this did she sleep free of the nightmares. Angel listened to her breath and held her soft, heavily pregnant body close. He smiled at the thought that while he swore he would never do this again, fate had once again conspired against him. At least there was no risk of anything other than cuddling right now. His hand moved slow soothing circles over her distended stomach. He could feel the baby fidgeting in it's cramped quarters. Any day now, it would be outside with them.

Cordelia had turned out to be quite the amazing one, super coach of Lamaze and vitamin and milk police. That was what Buffy called her anyway. She swore Cordy must have a demon streak somewhere to be so tenacious about the whole thing. Angel wouldn't want to cross Cordy when she crossed her arms and tapped her foot either. Buffy always drank her milk and ate her vitamins right away when she did that.

The cravings had gotten worse this week. Beet pancakes covered in pineapple syrup had to have been the worst. Angel wasn't sure, but he suspected Buffy had even been getting into his blood lately. One of her glasses of "tomato juice" looked way to red and smooth to him yesterday. He could have investigated further, but in the end he really didn't want to know.

The baby kicked Angel's hand, causing a small rounded bump on Buffy's tummy. Angel was tempted to grab it and hold on, but last time he did that the baby flailed about and woke Buffy. She got so little sleep anymore. Only when Angel held her was she able to rest and business had been too busy of late for them to line up much.

Angel wondered about the baby as he lay there, feeling it move under his hand. The idea of being a father was so strange. Before being a vampire he never thought of it much because he was too young and wild. Later it was never an issue or possibility. Now it was moving under his hand. Even if the baby wasn't his biologically he already loved it. He already thought of it as his. Buffy had come to him and he had promised and the baby was his. The idea made him almost happy enough to worry about the curse, but thankfully he was also so scared and pessimistic about the whole thing that it wasn't a problem. He knew he was going to screw this up.

He felt the baby move again and Buffy groaned in her sleep. The he realized it wasn't just the baby. The bands of her womb were contracting, sending ripples along the girth of her belly.

"Buffy, Buffy wake up. This is it, we gotta get youâ€¦" it was broad daylight outside, and he wanted to be with her, "somewhere else?"

Then he felt a warm wetness down his legs with the next contraction and Buffy screamed herself awake. Angel held her tight until it was over and then he got up.

"You need to go, now."

Cordelia stepped off the elevator. "You screamed? Wesley went to get the car."

Buffy sat up and began to pant. "Not gonna make that."

Angel looked down at her suddenly sweat-sheered body. He went whiter than usual. "You cannot be serious."

She was serious. Less than an hour later, Cordelia handed Angel a damp, squalling infant girl.

"Congratulations, Daddy. Go get aquatinted while I clean up Mommy."

Angel held the tiny, fragile body close. She looked like Buffy only tinier, if that was possible. He held out his finger and she grabbed it and began to suck on the tip. He bent forward and kissed her forehead softly. Then he took her to her mother.

As he watched them together, Buffy and her new daughter, he felt the tear run down his cheek. He knew things had now gotten ****really**** complicated. He wasn't sure he minded so much.

End
file.